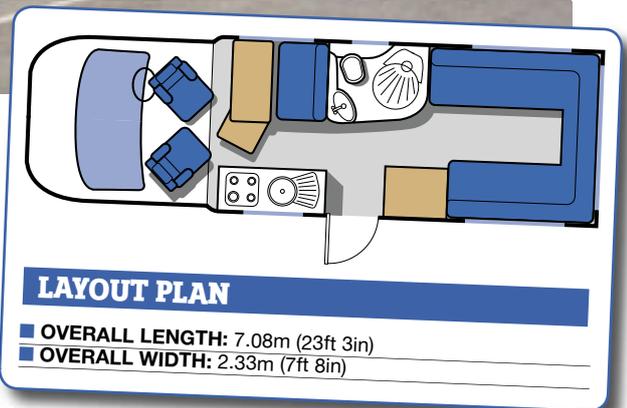


## BESSACARR E695 ELEGANCE



Words & pictures  
by Jonathan Lloyd



# ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?

*Lounging around in motorhomes is as British as our weather is unpredictable: a pair of posterior pamperers squares up*



**B**oth these combatants are little more than a half-tone dot on the history of motorcaravanning timeline, as each is just a few years young. 'Yoofs' they may be, but both have already captured both

hearts and minds.

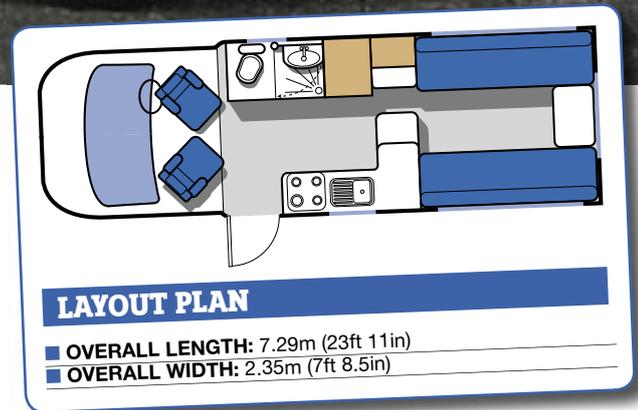
Let's take a closer look at the contenders: Bessacarr is part of the Swift Group, which is now the UK's biggest motorhome producer. Marquis is the UK's biggest dealer with branches... well... practically everywhere. The Marquis County range is built by Auto-Sleepers, our longest established volume motorcaravan converter.

Hampshire is a relatively new addition: last year it gained a new low profile overcab and now it has a new motor - one of the very latest Mercedes Euro V compliant units that claims to be 'leaner, meaner and greener.'

Price-wise, there is about ten per cent difference as tested, but if the Bessie's base



## MARQUIS HAMPSHIRE



had been specified to match the Hampshire's, then the price difference would have been reduced to a few grand.

The received wisdom on rear lounge motorcaravans is that they are popular among British purchasers because they are all triple aspect, or more prosaically, have windows on three sides. This allows oodles of natural light to enter the salon.

Further, as our weather frequently doesn't allow as much of an al-fresco lifestyle as we would wish, the idea of having two long sofas always available for daytime sprawling is instantly appealing.

### MOTIVE POWER

As presented for the pre-match scrutinising, 163 Euro V-friendly nags (Marquis on Mercedes Sprinter) play 130 Euro IV-friendly nags (Bessacarr on Fiat Ducato): no contest really.

Marquis has chosen Merc's new 163bhp engine to replace the outgoing 2.2-litre 150bhp unit, and it isn't just the old unit with better exhaust traps. Actually, its displacement is smaller than the older, so now at 2143cc; it's really a 2.1-litre

motor. A longer stroke and new counter-rotating balancing shafts has given a more comfortable and quieter idle, and much less of a bark when on load.

The big question is, will Fiat be able to shimmy its larger 3.0-litre engine under the Euro V bar? I do hope so as it feels more determined than some rivals' much smaller motors. When compared to the Merc's new unit, The Fiat's is getting on for 50 per cent larger and I'm afraid that - although it's currently a deeply unfashionable view - I'm with our Stateside friends on this: 'there ain't no substitute for cubes'.

Current advertising proclaims the new Merc motor to be more economical by up to 3mpg, with a 10 per cent increase in torque and improved exhaust emissions. However, a poke about in the small print did suggest that the consumption figures were lab-based, and not the result of on-the-road testing. In addition,



- 1 The Fiat offers 157 horsepower motor and ComfortMatic auto gearbox as an option
- 2 Mercedes base included optional auto gearbox

# On Test Bessacarr E695 Elegance & Marquis Hampshire

## BESSACARR E695 ELEGANCE



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3 Bessie boasts a dining area up front, and separate from the lounge

4 Sumptuous U-shaped lounge is great

5 Compact kitchen squeezes in all the kit

### I LIKED

- Use of interior space
- Crisp exterior styling
- Pin-sharp road holding
- Swivelling cab seats
- Option of 3.0-litre engine and ComfortMatic auto

### I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Foldaway or sliding kitchen work top extension

### I DISLIKED

- Too-short nearside rear single bed

the torque-converter auto gearbox fitted to the tested Hampshire could well be thirstier than Fiat's ComfortMatic auto-changing manual.

### ROAD MANNERS

Truth be told, both were perfectly acceptable at everything, but my brief on these tests is to flag up differences, so with rather more emphasis than perhaps is justified...

Hampshire's limousine-like progress meant that we just glided, with the chassis ironing out our ever-worsening road surfaces with aplomb. The Bessie's ride was rather over-firm, banging and crashing over potholes a little too much for my - past its best-before date - arthritic frame.

Cornering in the Hampshire was predictable rather than precise - attempts to hurry it through a slalom manoeuvre at anything above very moderate speeds left it wallowing around like a boat caught in a storm. In contrast, the Bessie provided pin-sharp handling, recovering immediately from sudden changes of direction.

What I meant to do and didn't, was to measure kerb-to-kerb turning circles - the Merc definitely felt as though it was turning tighter and with less wheel twiddling than the Fiat.

On the payload front, purchasers will know exactly what they've got to play with as both manufacturers tell us precisely what is included in the essential habitation allowance. Even more useful is the fact that all Swift Group products list the weight implications accompanying any option packs or individual accessories specified.

It seemed unnecessarily parsimonious for a motorcaravan of the calibre of the Hampshire to arrive without a reversing camera. Bizarrely, the accompanying bump didn't list one as being available, either as a separate entity or as part of an option pack.

The Bessacarr's Elegance option pack included a reversing camera mated to one of those combi monitor/rear view mirror gizmos.

Sadly, the Hampshire's limousine like progress was spoilt by the metallic scraping noise of the exhaust extension making regular contact with the road. Really, it beggars belief that it escaped the production line inspectors in such a condition. This has been previously reported in this august organ as a problem with these Marquis Mercs. Hardly serious, just annoying.

So, the Hampshire wins on ride comfort but loses on cornering and body roll. Surprisingly, the Bessie had the more comfortable seats - its better handling being paid for by that crash and bash over the bumps.

### LOUNGE AND DINE

As we've already hinted, lounges are important to us Brits. Why? Well, because we spend a fair amount of our time in them. Hence, fabrics that appear bright and jolly or 'vibrant' in the showroom can quickly become tiring when seated among them for extended periods. So, purely in the interests of research, I always spend long periods sat in the lounge doing absolutely nothing except soaking in the ambience!

The fabrics chosen in both of these 'vans could be accurately described as restful. Marquis offers the same pattern in three different colourways. Bessie has a choice of two different patterns, though in broadly similar hues.

It's in the cabinetwork where the main differences are apparent. The Bessie had its signature, very blond cabinetwork with hardwood framed locker doors. Hampshire's 'teak' furniture felt more 1970s retro in contrast. Also, it doesn't use natural wood veneers but

a printed wood-style finish with knock-on plastic edging. It looked much better than it sounds, and the better acquainted we got, the more appealing it became.

Hampshire has wallboard in the same wood finish, while Bessie has stuck with the more common off-white finish to give a bit of relief from the wood.

Does the Hampshire have too much teak? Or is it richly integrated? It's your call.

Lounging first: both are at the rear consisting of two inward-facing sofas. It's along the rear wall where they differ. Bessacarr has opted for an additional inward-facing sofa converting the seating to a socially inclusive U-shape, while Marquis has a chest of drawers with an extending occasional table. We like motorcaravans so equipped, as they provide sufficient tabletop area for two without blocking the central gangway.

Bessie loungers will retrieve the freestanding table from its dedicated storage cupboard and place it in the central aisle for drinks or snacks, unless they go for the optional (extra cost) chest of drawers that can replace the across-the-rear seating.

Fans of the idiot's lantern have a slide-away all-singing all-dancing LCD TV as standard in the Marquis, whereas you just get the mounting brackets plus power and aerial sockets in the Bessie.

It did strike me as odd that the Hampshire's designers have gone to all the bother of installing a slide-away adjustable telly bracket in a recess, but managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by not hiding it completely when not in use. Why not put a locker door on it?

Artificial lighting in both is accomplished via a pleasing variety of fittings, ceiling-mounted luminaries, adjustable reading lights, plus downlighters. The majority of the Swift's lamps are low current drain, whereas only the indirect over locker 'mood' lighting in the Hampshire employs the latest technology.

Dining arrangements couldn't be less alike, principally because Bessie has squeezed in a half dinette at the pointy end, giving a totally separate dining area. In contrast, the Hampshire's dining room looked uncannily similar to its lounge!

You don't get owt for nowt, though, and some of the other accommodation in the Bessie has suffered by including a separate dining area - notably, the option for single beds. But more on that later...

Bessie's dining table extends cleverly, so that whoever sits in the swivelled cab passenger seat won't need gorilla arms to reach the tucker.

Hampshire is a dedicated two-berth, and as such could accommodate two diners on that clever sliding (and hinged) top to the chest of drawers. Additional diners/card players/quaffers will require the freestanding table to be deployed.

One would think that the Bessie is the clear winner here, and it is ahead on points, not because it has a separate dining area, but because its seating was - overall - better. The Hampshire's seating should have been the more comfortable, but over-high seat squabs spoil the experience.

### COOK'S QUARTERS

Both kitchens are linear, set along the nearside wall. Hampshire's runs forward from amidships, Bessie's is further forward,

## MARQUIS HAMPSHIRE



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6 Freestanding and pullout tables are possible in the lounge

7 Electrically adjustable beds are also great for 'lounger' relaxation

8 Just one of Hampshire's strong suits is its spacious well-planned kitchen



8

#### I LIKED

- Euro V emissions compliance
- Rear-wheel drive base vehicle
- Electrically adjustable orthopaedic beds
- Spacious well-planned kitchen
- Plenty of drawers

#### I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- A wider rear track to give a less over-bodied look
- Less body roll
- Lower squab height to lounge seats

#### I DISLIKED

- Exhaust pipe extension dragging along the road
- Absence of rear chassis extensions

# On Test Bessacarr E695 Elegance & Marquis Hampshire



between the residential entrance door and the cab.

Similar cooking equipment from different manufacturers sees each galley with a hob boasting three gas burners and one electric plate, a separate grill and a thermostatically controlled oven, plus a high-level 230V microwave. Neither has an extractor fan above, though cooks in both will appreciate the opening window adjacent.

Washer-uppers have a big round bowl and a removable grey plastic draining surface in the Bessie. Hampshire 'below stairs' staff have an inset sink with draining surface and a Chinchilla glass lid. Stop it now! It ain't made of chinchillas, but of toughened glass and has been designed for use as a chopping board/worktop.

Remove the plastic drainer in the Bessie and a tantalising suggestion of worktop will be revealed - sufficient rather than generous. Of course, terminally untidy cooks such as yours truly will always commandeer part of the adjacent table as a worktop extension. In contrast, Hampshire has a positively epicurean expanse of L-shaped worktop that can be increased still further by deploying an extending base unit.

No contest here, although both are perfectly usable and similarly equipped with 'white goods,' the Hampshire's galley gets our vote as it offered considerably more worktop and storage.

## BATHING SPACE

Both washrooms are located on the offside. Hampshire's is as far forward as it could be; Bessie's more amidships, sandwiched between its two seating areas. Marquis and Bessacarr designers have used quite different approaches. There isn't a lemon, though; both should be easy to use and with no obvious design gaffs. Hampshire has a swing-wall design that forms a separate showering space; Bessie continues to use the Swift Group's well-known walk-in shower cubicle (with curved acrylic opaquely-glazed door).

Similar Thetford swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette loots are standard equipment, though the Bessie's is alone in supplying a wheeled

9 Amidships washroom has an instantly available walk-in shower cubicle

10 Slideout slatted extensions convert the lounge to a generously sized double bed in a jiffy

## HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

## BESSACARR E695 ELEGANCE

### PRICE

- **From:** £49,200 OTR (all prices quoted include VAT @ 15 per cent)
- **As tested:** £50,175 OTR

### BASICS (\*manufacturer's figures)

- **Berths:** 4
- **Three-point belted seats:** 4 (incl driver)
- **Warranty:** Base vehicle and conversion 3 years
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** Yes
- **Construction:** Overcab coachbuilt with aluminium clad bonded sandwich side panels, one-piece GRP roof and rear end cap, aluminium side skirts
- **Length:** 7.08m (23ft 3in)\*
- **Width:** 2.33m (7ft 8in)\*
- **Height:** 3.05m (10ft 0in)\*
- **Wheelbase:** 4.04m (13ft 3in)\*
- **Rear overhang:** 2.06m (6ft 9in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 4005kg
- **Payload:** 560kg (after deductions for driver @ 75kg, Elegance Pack and 90 per cent fuel, fresh water, gas)

### THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Fiat Ducato Heavy Camper chassis cab
- **Engine:** 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 130bhp
- **Transmission:** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Brakes:** Servo-assisted discs all-round with ABS & EBD
- **Suspension:** Front: Independent with McPherson struts. Rear: Rigid axle with elliptical springs
- **Features:** Electrically adjusted mirrors, electric windows, remote central locking, engine immobiliser, driver and passenger airbags. Stereo radio/CD player

### INSIDE

- **Layout:** Swivelling cab seats, nearside forward kitchen with half-dinette opposite, nearside amidships entrance door, offside washroom, nearside wardrobe, rear U-shaped lounge
- **Insulation:** Expanded polystyrene: floor 32mm, walls and roof 25mm
- **Interior height:** 1.92m (6ft 3.5in) min

### KITCHEN

- **Sink:** Stainless steel round bowl, removable plastic drainer, monobloc mixer tap
- **Cooker:** Thetford slot-in unit. Hob with 3 gas burners and 1 electric hotplate. Separate grill and oven. Sanyo 230V 700W microwave oven

- **Fridge:** Thetford N104 three-way with auto energy selection (SES). Capacity 105 litres

### WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford C250 swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette with wheeled waste holding tank
- **Basin:** Moulded basin partially inset into wooden base, monobloc mixer tap
- **Shower:** Separate walk-in shower compartment with curved rigid door and wooden duckboard, monobloc mixer tap

### BEDS

- **Lounge double**
- **Length:** 2.12m (6ft 11.5in)
- **Width:** 1.76m (5ft 9in)
- **Alternative lounge singles nearside**
- **Length:** 1.76m (5ft 9in)
- **Width:** 730mm (2ft 5in)
- **offside**
- **Length:** 1.93m (6ft 4in)
- **Width:** 730mm (2ft 5in)
- **Overcab double**
- **Length:** 1.93m (6ft 4in)
- **Width:** 1.31m (4ft 3.5in)
- **Headroom:** 620mm (2ft 0.5in) max

### EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh water tank:** Underslung, Insulated, 90 litres (19.8 gallons)
- **Waste water tank:** Underslung, 68 litres (15 gallons)
- **Water and space heater:** Truma Combi boiler with blown-air, gas-mains operation
- **Leisure battery:** 95 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 7kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** All 12V. Most are LED or low drain. Central luminaire in lounge, plus good range of downlighters and reading lamps. Awning light
- **Sockets:** 230V: 5, 12V: 1

### OPTIONAL EXTRAS

- **Fitted to test vehicle**
- **Base:** Elegance pack: Cab air-conditioning, cruise control, colour reversing camera with screen on rear view mirror (£975)
- **Conversion:** None fitted
- **Other options**
- **Base:** Upgrade to 3.0-litre, 157bhp engine and ComfortMatic automatic transmission (£3695), EU approved detachable towbar and electrics (£465)
- **Conversion:** Winter Pack: Fresh and waste water tank heaters, drain insulation, fridge vent covers (£185), roof rack and ladder (£460), chest of drawers in lounge (£147)

E&OE



## HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

## MARQUIS HAMPSHIRE

### PRICE

- **From:** £54,995 OTR (all prices quoted include VAT @ 15 per cent)
- **As tested:** £57,995 OTR

### BASICS *(\*manufacturer's figures)*

- **Berths:** 2
- **Three-point belted seats:** 2 (incl driver)
- **Warranty:** Base vehicle 3 years, conversion 2 years
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** Yes
- **Construction:** Low profile coachbuilt, GRP clad bonded sandwich walls, GRP moulded roof, rear end cap and skirts
- **Length:** 7.29m (23ft 11in)\*
- **Width:** 2.35m (7ft 8.5in)\*
- **Height:** 2.85m (9ft 4in)\*
- **Wheelbase:** 4.32m (14ft 2in)\*
- **Rear overhang:** 1.95m (6ft 5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3880kg
- **Payload:** 420kg (after deduction for driver @ 75kg, 95 per cent fuel, fresh water, gas, hook-up cable)

### THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 316 chassis cab
- **Engine:** 2.1-litre turbo-diesel producing 163bhp
- **Transmission:** Five-speed traditional automatic gearbox (with torque converter), rear-wheel drive
- **Brakes:** Discs all-round, ABS & ESP
- **Suspension:** Front: independent with transverse leaf spring. Rear: rigid axle on elliptical springs
- **Features:** Electric windows, electrically adjusted mirrors, central locking engine immobiliser, Stereo radio/CD player, driver and passenger airbags

### INSIDE

- **Layout:** Entrance door forward on nearside, washroom opposite, nearside amidships kitchen, wardrobe & cocktail cabinet opposite, rear lounge with central chest of drawers and two longitudinal inward-facing sofas
- **Insulation:** Floor 30mm polystyrene, walls and roof 24mm Styrofoam
- **Interior height:** 1.90m (6ft 3in) min

### KITCHEN

- **Sink:** Inset stainless steel bowl and draining surface with Chinchilla glass lid, Monobloc mixer tap
- **Cooker:** Spinflo Caprice Mk 3 slot-in unit. Hob with 3 gas burners and 1 electric hotplate. Separate grill and oven. Daewoo 230V 700W microwave oven

- **Fridge:** Dometic RM 7361 three-way, manual energy selection. Capacity: 88 litres

### WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford C200 swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- **Basin:** Moulded basin with monobloc mixer tap
- **Shower:** Walk-in shower compartment created by swing-wall and hinged infill panel. Monobloc mixer tap

### BEDS

- **Lounge singles**
- **Length:** 2.02m (6ft 7.5in)
- **Width:** 720mm (2ft 4.5in)

### EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh water tank:** Underslung, 91 litres (20 gallons)
- **Waste water:** Underslung, 79 litres (17.5 gallons)
- **Water heater:** Truma boiler, gas-mains operation
- **Space heater:** Truma convector with blown-air circulation, gas-mains operation
- **Leisure battery:** 110 amp hr, additional 110 amp hr battery for bed adjustment
- **Gas:** 2 x 13kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** LED indirect lighting over high-level lockers, plus halogen or standard filament lamps: central luminaire in lounge, downlighters, reading lamps, awning light
- **Sockets:** 230V: 2, 12V: 1

### OPTIONAL EXTRAS

- **Fitted to test vehicle**
- **Base:** Anniversary Pack Option 2: automatic gearbox, alloy wheels, cruise control, cab air-conditioning (£3000)
- **Conversion:** None fitted
- **Other options**
- **Base:** Anniversary Pack Option 1 Alloy wheels, cruise control, cab air-conditioning (£2000)
- **Conversion:** High-line overcab with bed or lockers (£995), Alternative soft furnishing fabric colours in same pattern (FOC)

E&OE

waste holding tank.

Hampshire has a moulded floor throughout the smallest room; the Bessie opts for wood block-patterned vinyl, except in the shower, where the moulded tray holds a wooden duckboard. Hampshire's floor has a raised central dividing ridge which some might find annoying, though it didn't bother me unduly: at least, not as much as the lack of a window did. An opening, opaquely glazed unit in the Bessie was just the ticket. Not only did it let the light flood in, it will also provide better ventilation than Hampshire's rooflight-only solution.

Available storage for toiletries in the Hampshire was only just about adequate, whereas it was generous in the Bessie, and had sufficient capacity for a few 'Labrador approved' toilet rolls

Just when it looked a forgone conclusion, the Hampshire fought back with a clever retractable clothes airer/drier.

### BEDTIME

Beds... Bessie has more of them! But Hampshire could have been specified with a luton overcab with foldaway transverse double bed (£995), though Bessie couldn't have been specified with a low-profile overcab.

That said, those specifying additional sleeping accommodation in the Hampshire should be aware that it is not possible to increase the travel seat complement - this remains stuck obstinately at two including the driver.

As this comparison test is concentrating on rear lounge models, then we'll concentrate on the beds converted from these seating areas.

They are quite inflexible actually. The Hampshire has two longitudinal singles, and there is no opportunity to make up as a transverse double, whereas the Bessie's rear boudoir provides the opposite - on the face of it anyway. Here there is only a transverse double, with no opportunity to sleep two adults as singles unless one partner is petite.

It may not be fair to criticise either model for the lack of mix and match. Here's why. First, the Hampshire is marketed as a

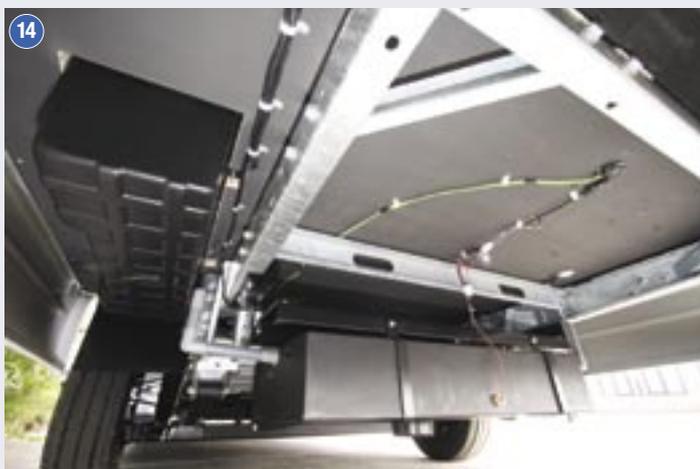
**11 Hampshire's windowless washroom was a tad gloomy**

**12 Supremely comfortable beds have clever Frolexus springing**

## BESSACARR E695 ELEGANCE



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13 Plenty of storage, including room for a second leisure battery

14 Bessie's substantial chassis extensions get my vote

15 No TV, just a bracket in the Bessacarr

dedicated two berth with single beds: if you want a Marquis County model with the option of a double bed at the rear, then you can opt for a for a Suffolk or Berkshire.

Secondly, the unique selling point of the Hampshire's sleeping accommodation is that it is not just typical caravan foam benches! Far from it, as the somnolent will quickly discover. It's not what you can see, but what's hidden underneath. Standard equipment on the Hampshire is two individual electrically adjustable Frolexus orthopaedic beds with their unique 'flower petal' suspension system. Not only do they provide an ergonomically correct float for the mattress, they are also fully electrically adjustable. Both ends can be independently raised, plus a 'steamer chair-type' lounger can be created. No worries about flattening the leisure battery whilst finding the perfect position, as the motors are driven by an additional dedicated leisure battery, so you won't suddenly be plunged into darkness.

Absolutely perfect score for Hampshire here, making it impossible for the Bessie to win - unless, of course, you need extra accommodation (overcab double bed) with belted travel seats to match: the Bessacarr offers both.

### STORE ROOM

Sometimes the problem is not enough of it - storage space that is. However, both our combatants could have the opposite problem. Plenty of underseat storage, cupboards and high-level lockers are not a problem in themselves, though owners will need to take care. If every locker or cupboard is filled enthusiastically, then either 'van could easily become overloaded.

Three cheers for the Hampshire because it has plenty of drawers, something that's a bonus in any motorcaravan. There's even a drawer for one's smalls - a drawer for drawers in fact!

However, there's only the sound of one hand clapping for the ostentatious idiocy that is the drop-down wine and glass carrier. The idea is okay: it's the location that's the problem. Anyone with merely a passing familiarity with rear lounge layouts may be aware that folk sit with feet up and their backs against the rear wall of the motorcaravan. However, if you own a Hampshire, your partner might have just hit you on the napper with this descending bottle and glass carrier. It would have been far better if positioned to appear over the chest of drawers.

### LIFE SUPPORT

There's enough of everything in each 'van to suit most folk. The Hampshire's additional leisure battery is a good idea, though I question the rationale behind placing the charging unit at the back of the wardrobe.

These units generate a surprising amount of heat and it is inevitable that clothes placed on the hanging rail will considerably reduce the efficiency of its ventilation grilles. It was great to see that Marquis has made safety a priority by including a fire extinguisher and LPG gas alarm, as well as the ubiquitous smoke alarm.

Bessie's underslung water fresh water tank has a double skin - providing better protection against freezing than the Hampshire's single-skin item.

On the other hand, the Hampshire's gas



cylinder locker will hold cylinders twice the size of those in the Bessie's compartment.

Toe toasting is via blown warm air in the Bessie and it can be this way in the Hampshire as well. This is Hobson's choice in the Bessie, but the convector space heater (with blown-air too) provided a choice in the Hampshire. We prefer having a convector, as they seem to provide a more constant temperature than blown-air-only efforts, which keep turning themselves off as they cycle.

I didn't expect to find a spare wheel under the Fiat (don't get me started on that dreaded can of goo), but I did expect one on the Mercedes. No spare on either, then. Not only that, neither converter lists a spare wheel and cradle as an extra-cost option. A curse on both their houses - I would never travel without a spare wheel. Out of the last three punctures on the Lloyd fleet of vehicles, two damaged the tyre so badly that they were beyond help. Lack of a spare wheel would have meant being stranded.

I was concerned about the lack of chassis extensions aft of the standard Mercedes rails on the Hampshire. Interestingly, the motorcaravan with the thinner floor is the one with the biggest area unsupported behind the rear axle.

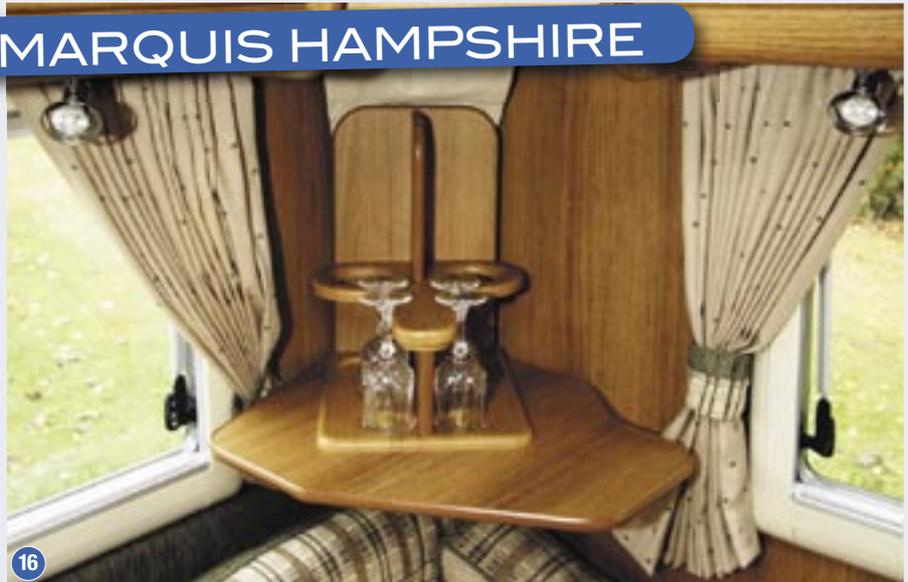
**CONCLUSION**

In this particular comparison we've concluded that these two are both well thought-out and practical interpretations of a rear lounge layout. They were pretty evenly matched, though each had different strengths. Which will suit best depends on what's on your particular wish list. Although these two are not identical, careful selection from the options list can make them pretty similar.

Regular readers may be aware that I never wimp out of making a choice. Mine would be the Hampshire, but only because it's on a rear-wheel drive chassis and, more importantly, because of my rapidly decreasing mobility we need the option to have single beds with unimpeded access and egress. Simple!

We thought that overall the Bessie had the more attractive furniture and the best use of space. The optional 3.0-litre (157bhp) motor with ComfortMatic auto gearbox is a belter. If only the Bessacarr E695 had two adult-length single beds at the rear, it would have won. ■

**MARQUIS HAMPSHIRE**



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16 Drop-down drinks holder is a good idea in a poor location

17 I was less than impressed with the lack of chassis extensions under the rear

18 All-singing, all-dancing TV/DVD/CD/MP3 player is standard



**VEHICLES LOANED FOR EVALUATION BY:**

*Bessacarr E695 Elegance*

Bessacarr Motorhomes, Dunswell Road, Cottingham, East Yorkshire HU16 4JX. (tel: 01482 847 332; web site: www.swiftleisure.co.uk)

*Marquis Hampshire*

Marquis Motorhomes, Administration Head Office, Winchester Road, Lower Upham, Nr Southampton, Hants SO32 1HA (tel: 0800 267777; web site: www.marquismotorhomes.co.uk)